Equality of Opportunity and Freedom from Discrimination

MHR Connections

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Anne Lacquette has life long experience with discrimination

Earlier this year Anne Lacquette was appointed to the Manitoba Human Rights Commission Board of Commissioners. Anne is from Mallard, Manitoba where she is very active in her community.

Anne believes that everyone, no matter who they are, should be treated equally. The value of human rights she says is to ensure that everyone is treated with the respect that they earn and deserve.

Anne also says that as an Aboriginal person she has experienced discrimination throughout her life. "It can come from people who don't even know me, but base their prejudice on the colour of my skin," she says.

Anne is looking forward to her time as a Human Rights Commissioner in Manitoba. Although her experiences may be based on discrimination and ancestry she says it is important to protect people from discrimination in all of its many forms.

"Discrimination, no matter on what basis, can destroy someone's self esteem and self worth. Everyone needs to be protected and allowed to flourish and become a contributing member of Canadian society."

Anne's community of Mallard, Manitoba is located on the southeast end of Waterhen Lake, approximately 334 kms northwest of Winnipeg. The nearest neighbour, across the bay is Waterhen First Nations Reserve, also known as Skownan. The population is 150 residents, who live in 35 houses.

The Rights Connection

Chairperson Jerry Woods says "Thank you and Goodbye"

Since 2001, as both Vice-Chair and Chairperson, I have been continually impressed with the resilience, determination and grace of the people who fight against discrimination. These people include complainants, advocates, employers, students, teachers and many more. Most are unsung heroes and I thank you for your silent work defending human rights and saying no to discrimination.

Over the years I have listened to Manitobans. I heard Aboriginal people and newcomers who want a better relationship with the Winnipeg Police Service. After five years of discussions with Police Chiefs, community leaders and youth, I am told that there is improvement and this makes me optimistic for the future. I heard from people with disabilities, and hopefully the Commission has helped in their fight for equality of opportunity. I have talked with women about the endurance of sexual harassment in the workplace and struggle to try and understand why it continues.

Yes, past issues like harassment continue to haunt us and future issues such as mental health will no doubt challenge us. This should not stop us from celebrating human rights accomplishments and finding strength in them for tomorrow's battles.

The victories are the moments I will always remember. For example, December 9, 2004 when Chris Vogel and Richard North received the Commitment Award of Manitoba for their long-fought-for achievements in the field of equality rights and contributing to the elimination of discrimination based on sexual orientation. That very same day, the Supreme Court of Canada paved the way to extend the right of civil marriage to same-sex couples.

The strength of the Pasternak twins who fought for the right of all girls to play on boys' high school hockey teams also will stay with me,

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Human rights advocate chosen as Festival Ambassador

"Ambassador Generals embody Folklorama's mission of celebrating diversity and promoting cultural understanding." Diane Dwarka

Human rights advocate Diane Dwarka, who is also the Past President of the Community Legal Education Association (CLEA) and was on the Steering Committee of the Coalition for Human Equality for many years, will be one of four Ambassador Generals for the 2014 Folklorama Festival. She joins Precious Quejada, Ankit Bahal and Nish Verma who are all taking on the most prestigious positions that a volunteer can aspire to in the Festival.

This year, 184 people vied for four positions, adult male and female ambassador and youth male and female ambassador. The selection process is rigorous. During the first phase, competitors are asked questions that challenge their knowledge of Folklorama, their own culture and culture in general. From this group those with the best scores out of 70 become the semi-finalists. There were 12 semi-finalists.

Those who have attended the Human Rights Commitment Award of Manitoba Ceremony will be familiar with Diane. For many years she took part in the awards luncheon and often offered thanks for the meal.

Diane said she was very pleased and honoured when she was declared the winner in the female adult category and she looks forward to attending various cultural events during the year.

Last year's Ambassador Generals were: Julie Desrochers, Thyaharajan Visweswaran, Liezel Jacinto and Godfrey Tamayo.

Canadian experience requirement considered to be discriminatory

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has a new policy on removing "Canadian experience" as a job requirement.

The OHRC found that many newcomers turn to unpaid work such as volunteering, internships or low-skilled "survival jobs" to meet the requirement for Canadian experience. They also face obstacles when trying to get professional accreditation since some regulatory bodies will not admit new members without prior work experience in Canada. As a result, they end up in jobs that do not correspond to their education, skills and experience.

The new policy sets out the OHRC's position that a strict requirement for "Canadian experience" is discriminatory, and can only be used in rare circumstances. Employers and regulatory bodies need to ask about all of a job applicant's previous work – where they got their experience does not matter. The policy also tells employers and regulatory bodies how to develop practices, policies and programs that do not result in discrimination.

Last fall, the OHRC consulted newcomers to Canada in the last 10 years about their experiences looking for jobs in Ontario since their arrival, and employers or human resources representatives, who use "Canadian experience" as a job requirement. The OHRC also spoke with a number of organizations and individuals, including agencies serving newcomers, employers, government and regulatory bodies.

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as will the likes of David Martin and Ainley Bridgeman whose victory for audible cues at intersections benefit people with disabilities when they are attempting to cross streets at controlled intersections; or Betty Unrau whose efforts changed a government policy regarding family members providing homecare.

And who can forget the amazing Arlene Ursel who is paraplegic and fought and won her case of discrimination against a hotel owner who decided to no longer make an accessible room available to her.

I have always put youth and education at the forefront and my years hosting the many youth conferences in Winnipeg, Brandon, Thompson and The Pas have left me with vivid memories of the creativity and tenacity of young people who are determined that the future world will be a better place. I certainly will never forget the enormous Peace by Piece banner made by students for the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; their messages of hope stitched together and gracing the entire grand stairway inside the Manitoba Legislative building.

I am proud of Manitoba's strong tradition of protecting human rights and it has been an honour serving on the Manitoba Human Rights Commission. I will continue to respect the staff, Commissioners and those Manitobans I have listened to and talked with, and consider each one my friend.

Thank you, Merci, Meegwich,

Jerry

September 2013 - June 2014
Education Programs

Information regarding topics, time, costs and location of the 2013-2014 Commission's human rights seminars will be available in mid September. Please visit our website and check out our programs and online booking at that time.